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Broadband RI Teams Up with Brown, RISD to Discover Innovation in Improving Broadband Adoption

A Better World by Design announces its 5th annual challenge: Connecting the Disconnected

June 7, 2012 (Providence, RI) — The Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC) today announced that its Broadband Rhode Island (BBRI) initiative and A Better World by Design will team up to connect the disconnected – through a design challenge that will uncover innovative ideas for improving broadband adoption among disadvantaged populations.

A Better World by Design, established in 2008 by Brown University's chapter of Engineers Without Borders and leaders from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), issues an annual challenge to innovators across the globe to use the power of design and technology to build a better world. The 2012 challenge, "Connect the Disconnected," will identify innovative plans for improving access to information for those who face educational, economic or geographical barriers. To learn more about the challenge and view the detailed prompt, visit: <http://www.abetterworldbydesign.com/challenge/>.

"Through the RIEDC's Broadband Rhode Island initiative, the state is pleased to partner with higher education in this design challenge to identify innovative approaches to help improve access for our citizens to online information and to Rhode Island's leading broadband infrastructure," said Governor Lincoln D. Chafee.

"We're honored and excited to work with A Better World by Design to uncover new and creative solutions to closing the digital divide," said Stuart Freiman, Broadband Program Director, RIEDC. "The results of this challenge could greatly enhance the current solutions to this pressing 21st century social issue."

Each year, A Better World by Design conducts a student-organized conference in Providence that leverages the expertise of innovators from a number of disciplines, from engineering to entrepreneurship to academia. The collaborative platform deepens the understanding of how design, technology and enterprise can help engage and enhance communities. This year's participants will focus their efforts on creative solutions to the digital divide, to ensure that the benefits of Internet access don't elude those who need them most. The 2012 Better World by Design conference will be held in Providence from September 28 -30.

“We are extremely excited for this year’s challenge prompt. Information access is a relevant and pressing issue in our world today, and with Broadband RI, we hope to discover an innovative solution that can be brought toward implementation.” said Katharine Li, A Better World by Design’s competition coordinator.

Broadband RI Internet Adoption Fast Facts

- Over 30% of Rhode Island adults do not use the Internet today
- Key barriers to non-adoption are: affordability, relevance, and lack of training
- Nearly 80% of Fortune 500 companies post job openings exclusively online
- Rhode Island’s high rate of existing broadband coverage should enable the acceleration of adoption/usage, connectivity and digital literacy efforts in the state
- The 50 public libraries throughout RI help bridge the digital divide by offering some type of digital literacy support
- BBRI has identified over 2,000 public computing sites, has presented over 10 digital literacy community forums and has trained close to 60 volunteer digital literacy trainers in less than 1 year
- 71% of teens say the Internet has been the primary source for recent school projects

The public is encouraged to visit the A Better World by Design website at <http://www.abetterworldbydesign.com/challenge/> to find out more about the 2012 challenge.

About Broadband Rhode Island

Broadband Rhode Island, an initiative of Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC), is funded through December 2014 by the State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program (SBDD) as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The initiative focuses on broadband mapping and broadband planning in the State of Rhode Island. Programs will address public awareness and education about broadband and study and develop plans to increase adoption rate and broadband usage across all aspects of our lives including in our homes, schools, businesses, libraries, healthcare facilities, public safety and government. To learn more about Broadband Rhode Island please visit: <http://broadband.ri.gov>

About A Better World by Design

A Better World by Design is a three-day internationally acclaimed conference held annually at Brown & RISD campuses in Providence, RI that connects thousands of students, professionals, and individuals from a variety of disciplines in order to build a global community of socially conscious and passionate innovators. Our group of students has built a worldwide network of social innovators because we believe in thinking globally and acting locally. As we build our global presence, we continue to strengthen our relationships to create impact in our immediate communities. By collaborating with thought-leading students, academics, and professionals, Better World by Design continues to foster mutually enriching exchange and be a strong presence in the fields of sustainable and socially-conscious design. To learn more about A Better World by Design please visit: <http://www.abetterworldbydesign.com>